

ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER

187

brothel of Europe ? Again, scores of Zola's contemporaries, writers of various degrees, by trying to poetise the courtesan, had increased her influence a hundred-fold, and the time had come to check her encroachments by exhibiting her in her true colours, with all her vulgarity, her greed, her degradation, her shamelessness and heartlessness.

In September, 1879, when Zola had written about half of "Nana," he arranged with M. Laffitte, editor of "Le Voltaire," which was then publishing his articles on "scientific fiction," to produce the story in that newspaper; and M. Laffitte at once advertised it in a fashion worthy of Barnum himself. Huge posters appeared on all the walls of Paris, "displayed" announcements invaded the newspapers, sandwich men patrolled the streets, ticket-advertisements were even, affixed to the gutta-percha tubes of the pipe-lights in the tobacconists' shops ; and, indeed, upon every side one found the imperious injunction: *Read Nana, I Nana*
11 Nana, ! ! !
 All this greatly vexed Zola, who had shut himself up at Me"dan to finish the book, and who did not at all desire to be advertised in such an extravagant fashion. To make matters worse, the serial issue had scarcely commenced (October 16, 1879) when several newspapers began to

discuss the story, all the quidnuncs
demonstrating by A
plus B that the opening chapter was not at all
such as it
ought to be, and that the work was bound to
prove a failure.
Then, too, letters full of suggestions or criticism
or denun-
ciation rained upon Zola at Me"dan, putting
his nerves to
the severest test. Nevertheless, he worked
on steadily,
taking the greatest care over even the most
trifling details,
employing a friend to obtain precise
information on such

¹ Alexis, Z. c., p. 118.